

From IEMA Director James K. Joseph

Being prepared for any hazard is a cornerstone of emergency management. As we saw recently, that can include disasters as unexpected as record and near-record flooding in late December. Thanks to continual planning, training and exercises, along with the hard work and dedication of countless first responders and volunteers, the unique challenges of this event were met.

During the floods, Gov. Rauner and I traveled more than 1,600 miles over three days as we visited many of the communities battling the frigid floodwaters. I saw emergency managers and other first responders at their best, working to protect the people and communities they serve. I also saw the power of volunteers as they helped their friends and neighbors impacted by the floods.

Back at the State Emergency Operations Center in Springfield, I witnessed the tireless dedication of liaisons from several state agencies, our mutual aid partners, our federal partners and non-governmental agencies working together to ensure needed resources and personnel were deployed to help those in the field.

On behalf of Gov. Rauner and the state of Illinois, I want to thank everyone throughout Illinois who played a role in the flood response. Many people put aside New Year's Eve holiday plans and time-off to work long hours as part of the response effort. At the end of the day, please know that your contribution helped thousands of people in communities across the state.

While 2016 started in an unexpected manner, we look forward to an exciting and productive new year. In this issue you'll find articles about several of our programs and activities. As always, we welcome your input on information you'd like to see featured in future issues.



Dir. James Joseph briefs Gov. Bruce Rauner on flood impacts in Illinois prior to beginning a three-day road trip to communities fighting record and near-record flooding.

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New Year's Greetings from FEMA Region V

As we welcome 2016, I want to take this opportunity to thank you all for your continued partnership and commitment to the profession of emergency management. By working together as a team with you and all of our whole community partners, FEMA Region V has been able to accomplish great things this past year.

As the Region V Administrator, one of my priorities is to ensure that FEMA is ready to support our states for all hazards. We must always be poised and ready to respond – and have the ability and resources available to recover quickly should the need arise. We must continue finding innovative ways of engaging our partners, and more importantly, we need to continue working together as a team to achieve our mission.



Andrew Velasquez III, FEMA Region V Administrator

As we all know, the emergencies we respond to not only affect our communities but may also affect our families at the same time. Therefore, resiliency is more than ensuring that we can effectively respond as emergency managers when disaster strikes. We must also ensure we are personally prepared and have plans in place to protect our families.

With the new year upon us, we need to be aware of possible risks that our communities face. The El Niño weather pattern has received significant attention over the last few months and is certainly something we all need to take into consideration. These unusually warm ocean temperatures along the equator in the Pacific Ocean can have important consequences for weather and climate throughout the United States – even in the Midwest. We've already seen some of the extreme impacts from the flooding here in Illinois and Missouri. NOAA's forecast suggests this year could bring much more weather affected by El Niño throughout the United States, so it's important that we remain ready to respond to floods and more.

Unfortunately, we must also be aware of and plan for unexpected manmade events that can severely affect our communities. The threat of a cyber-attack is one such example. This hazard can bring operations to a standstill, posing significant threats not only to government offices, utilities and businesses but also to individuals and their personal computers with infecting viruses and identity theft.

And we cannot forget the recent terrorist attacks that occurred in Paris and California. People personally and professionally have been affected by these events. We need to work together to identify ways to educate our communities and have effective and integrated preparedness plans in place so we can prevent or reduce the dangers these threats pose. It is through strengthening our partnerships and working as a team that we will achieve our goals.

So again, thank you for everything you have done and continue to do as emergency managers. I hope you and your families had a very safe and happy holiday season, and let us all recommit ourselves to a successful new year.

I look forward to working with you in 2016!

Rare December Flooding Affects Many Across State

In late December, Illinoisans are accustomed to dealing with snow, ice and cold temperatures. Unfortunately, late December 2015 brought an unwelcome surprise in the form of tornadoes, heavy rains and record or near-record flooding in many communities across the state.

Spring-like severe storms hit the state on Dec. 23, with tornadoes sighted in several areas of the state. While some property damage related to the storms was reported, Illinois fared much better than Tennessee and Mississippi, where extensive damage and several fatalities resulted.

Heavy rainfall then took over from Dec. 26-28, causing several rivers to rise rapidly, endangering homes, businesses, roads and other critical infrastructure. Ten people lost their lives when their vehicles were swept away by floodwaters on roadways.

The State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) in Springfield was activated Dec. 28 to coordinate the state's support for communities battling rapidly rising flood waters. More than two dozen representatives from state agencies and mutual aid organizations worked in the SEOC for more than a week, including several days of 24/7 operations at the height of the response, to fill requests for personnel and resources needed to protect public health and safety.

In the field, IEMA regional staff played a key role by working closely with local emergency management officials on response issues and resource requests.

Gov. Bruce Rauner visited many affected communities during the flood event to meet with local officials, first

State Flood Response By the Numbers

1 million sandbags

10,515 tons of rock

4,546 tons of sand

732 rolls of plastic

8,600 hours by inmates filling/placing sandbags

133,000+ sandbags filled by inmates

responders and volunteers. Gov. Rauner declared 23 counties state disaster areas, including Alexander, Calhoun, Cass, Christian, Clinton, Cumberland, Douglas, Iroquois, Jackson, Jersey, Lawrence, Madison, Marion, Menard, Monroe, Morgan, Moultrie, Pike, Randolph, Richland, Sangamon, St. Clair and Vermilion counties.

The state disaster declaration ensured that a wide variety of state resources and personnel were available to help communities. Such resources included sandbags, sand, pumps, trucks, inmate crews and more.

When water began to recede, staff from IEMA's Bureau of Preparedness and Grant Administration provided information and support to local emergency management agencies in the affected counties as they began collecting initial damage information. At press time, that information was being reviewed and analyzed by IEMA staff.



(Left) Aerial view of floodwaters in Petersburg. (Right) Dir. Joseph discusses flood fight operations with Tom Mefferd, liaison to the SEOC from FEMA Region V. Both Joseph and Mefferd are former directors of DuPage County Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

Eight New County and Local EMA Coordinators in 2015

Local emergency management coordinators play a critical role in the safety of residents in their communities and counties. In 2015, we were happy to welcome eight new coordinators for accredited EMAs to the emergency management family in Illinois. They include (pictured right and below) William P. Babyar, DuPage County; Ernest Brown, Cook County; Scott Deming, Massac County; Dwight Hohl, Evanston; Emily Kies, St. Charles; and Bud Turner, Winnebago County. New coordinators not pictured include: Michael Hoelscher, Randolph County; and Terril Kaufman, Carbondale.



William P. Babyar



Ernest Brown



Scott Deming



Dwight Hohl



Emily Kies



Bud Turner

Charleston First 'Ready to Respond Community'

In early January, Charleston became the first city in Illinois to achieve IEMA's Ready to Respond Community designation. The program recognizes communities that achieve an enhanced level of preparedness through successful completion of rigorous criteria.

The Ready to Respond Community Program emphasizes a "whole community" approach to preparedness that involves elected officials, government entities, volunteer and not-for-profit organizations, private industry and residents. The program is voluntary and open to communities throughout the state.

The Ready to Respond Community designation is valid for three years, at which time Charleston officials can submit updated documentation in order to renew its status.

Communities interested in the Ready to Respond Community Program can contact Abby Damm at 217-558-4779.

The Ready to Respond Community program is the latest component of Illinois' Ready to Respond initiative. To date, five colleges and universities have received the Ready to Respond Campus designation after meeting that program's requirements.



Dir. James Joseph presented Charleston Mayor Brandon Combs with the Ready to Respond Community designation on Jan. 5.

Facilities Encouraged to File Tier II Reports Early

Owners or operators of facilities required to submit Tier II reports are encouraged to submit data as soon as possible during the January 1 to March 1 reporting period. Facilities are required to submit Tier II forms if they have hazardous chemicals on hand in quantities equal to or greater than set threshold levels.

Tier II reports provide state and local officials and the public with specific information on hazardous chemicals present at these facilities.

To prevent filing issues many facilities encountered during the 2015 filing period, IEMA has taken several steps, including increasing server capacity, system load tests and even tripling bandwidth for the reporting period.

Reporting facilities are strongly encouraged to create 2015 annual reports, enter all required data and certify the reports as early as possible rather than later in the filing period. It is also recommended that facilities use one of the following web browsers to optimize the Tier II Manager experience: Microsoft Internet Explorer 10 (non-compatibility mode), Mozilla Firefox 20.0+, or Google Chrome 26.0+. A wired high-speed Internet connection is also highly recommended.

Staff is available to answer questions via email (ema.tier2mgr@illinois.gov) and telephone (217-558-0559) on weekdays from 8:30 a.m. until 5 p.m.

More information about Tier II filing requirements is available on the IEMA website at www.illinois.gov/iema.

January is National Radon Action Month

IEMA kicked off National Radon Action Month in January by joining with the American Lung Association in Illinois (ALAIL) to launch a new statewide initiative to encourage home builders to install activated radon mitigation systems in new homes.

The systems reduce levels of radon, a radioactive gas that is the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers and the second-leading cause of lung cancer overall.

Illinois law currently requires home builders to install passive radon mitigation systems in all new construction. The Radon Excellence Program encourages builders to provide even more protection for their home buyers by activating those systems.

Elevated levels of the colorless, odorless, tasteless gas have been found in all 102 Illinois counties. It's estimated that nearly 1,200 Illinois citizens die from radon-related lung cancer each year.

IEMA's radon program staff encourages Illinois residents to test their homes for radon and, if radon levels above 4 picocuries per liter of air (4pCi/L) are found, to have a radon mitigation system installed by an IEMA-licensed contractor. IEMA also licenses radon measurement contractors.

To learn more about the health risks of radon and how you can protect your family from this hazard, visit IEMA's radon webpage at www.radon.illinois.gov. For more information about the Radon

Excellence Program, visit the ALAIL website at www.healthhouse.org.



New homes built with active radon mitigation systems can be identified by yard signs like this one.

Questions about radon? Call the Radon Information Line 800-325-1245

Illinois Represented on National Task Force

Edie Casella, who coordinates IEMA's public-private partnership program, has been selected as a subject matter expert to serve on a task force established by the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) Private Sector Committee. Casella is one of two state government members of the 10-member task force, which includes several private sector representatives.

The task force is charged with identifying national model public-private collaborative practices and developing recommendations for information sharing and collaboration between the public and private sector organizations.

The group, which meets monthly, will review and comment on FEMA's National Business Emergency Operations Center draft operational and policy framework, as well as develop recommendations for review by NEMA leadership.

Casella, an employee of Western Illinois University assigned to IEMA, has worked with Illinois' public-private partner program since its inception in 2007.



Edie Casella was selected recently to serve on a national private sector task force.



On Dec. 10, 2015, the Village of Bensenville (DuPage County) graciously hosted an IEMA regional staff meeting for about 50 IEMA staff from north and northwest Illinois. Staff also had the opportunity to tour the new Police and EMA Headquarters, which opened in the summer of 2015. IEMA would like to thank EMA Director Don Schultz for his hospitality and partnership.

At the Bensenville regional staff meeting and a similar staff meeting held in Springfield, management and employees discussed the past year of SEOC activations, as well as Governor's office and IEMA leadership initiatives for the future.



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New Safety Video Available to First Responders

When it comes to electricity, knowing what's safe and unsafe can mean the difference between life and death – not just for the victims and onlookers at the scene of an emergency, but for first responders as well.

To help ensure the safety of first responders, the non-profit Energy Education Council's Safe Electricity program has produced a new electrical safety video that is available at no cost.

The video shows scenarios as well as numerous real-life emergencies caught on video illustrating the kinds of electrical dangers firefighters and other first

responders can encounter. The 28-minute video can be viewed all at once or by chapter for viewing and training flexibility.

The main topics covered in the video include pulling electric meters from homes and buildings; downed power lines; elevated equipment in contact with overhead power lines; pad mount transformers; and power pole fires.

The streamed video can be viewed at <https://www.emailmeform.com/builder/form/XjqpC017w3L>. Agencies with limited Internet service can request a free DVD copy at info@SafeElectricity.org.



On Dec. 10, 2015, IEMA Director Joseph met with Major General Yoel Strick, head of the Israeli Homefront Command. During the meeting, the senior leadership of the Israeli delegation, the Israeli Ambassador to the United States, and the senior leadership of IEMA and the Illinois National Guard discussed and shared information relative to operations in both the state of Illinois and the country of Israel. Both MG Strick and Director Joseph left their time together committed to continuing their working relationship.

From left: Lt. Col. Robert Redding, National Guard Bureau (NGB) Israel Liaison Officer (LNO); Winnetka Police Chief Pat Kreis; Col. Amir Ulu, Israel Home Front Command "Dan" District Commander; IEMA Director James Joseph; Maj. Gen. Yoel Strick, Israel Home Front Command Commander; Winnetka Fire Chief Alan Berkowsky; Brig. Gen. Alicia Tate-Nadeau, Illinois National Guard (ILNG) Director of Joint Staff; Roey Gilad, Israel Consul General to Midwest; LT. Col. Ariel Blitz, Israel LNO to NGB; Maj. "Shep" Woodard, NGB LNO to Israel; and Jill Raymaker, Executive Director, Northeastern Illinois Public Safety Training Academy (NIPSTA).



State of Illinois
Illinois Emergency Management Agency

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